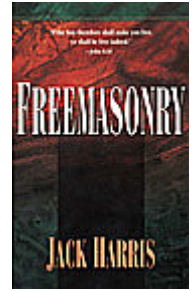


## A CRITICAL REVIEW OF JACK HARRIS'

## Freemasonry: The Invisible Cult in Our Midst

reviewed by Wayne E. Sirmon

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While I find this book riddled with half-truths and editorial comments which are blatantly misleading, I wish to limit this review to only a few of the most obvious and damaging errors. Since Mr. Harris has cited several obscure references, which I feel may be misquoted, taken out of context, or are themselves only opinions, my arguments in these cases may be less than complete. Still, I believe that sufficient proof can be offered to indicate that this book is flawed to such a degree that it should not be used as a source of information concerning the relationship between religion and the Masonic fraternity.

### What is a Cult?

In the Preface, Mr. Harris states that his book will "expose this anti-Christian cult and its damnable heresies..." and "A cult is defined as any group that embraces, teaches or practices religious doctrine contrary to the accepted and established truth of Biblical Christianity." He does not define "Biblical Christianity" but when this phrase is used, frequently it is an euphemism for an author's particular set of Christian beliefs. Later (pages 29 & 41), he labels the Jehovah's Witnesses, Mormons and Christian Scientists as "Christian cults." Given his broad definition of "cult" I wonder how he might label other Christian denominations whose scriptural interpretations differ from his (e.g. Roman Catholic).

It appears that Mr. Harris believes that masonry is a narrow, cult religion rather than a universal fraternity. The effects of this incorrect assumption first appear on page x. God is not "worshipped" in the lodge room. We pray at the beginning of each meeting to ask His blessing on our actions. The closing ceremonies include a benediction.

It is interesting to note that Mr. Harris gives proper credit (page 23) to the men who were instrumental in the development of modern, symbolic masonry—James Anderson and John T. Desaguiliers. Both men were Christian ministers.

### Albert Pike

Albert Pike was a great force in American Masonry during the nineteenth century. His leadership allowed for the development of the Scottish Rite into a major organization within the group of Masonic orders. On page 24, Mr. Harris states that Albert Pike was "a Brigadier General in the Civil War. Later, he was tried for treason." The truth of the matter is that he was a **Confederate** Brigadier General who was excluded from President Johnson's Amnesty Proclamation, because of rumors of illegal treatment of Federal troops. Brigadier General Pike was placed in command of the Indian Country in October, 1861, and it had been rumored that some of the Indians under Pike's command had scalped Union Soldiers. On June 24, 1865, he petitioned for a presidential pardon and on August 4, 1865, he submitted an affidavit pertaining to his military service and Indian relations. "The negative associations connected with his name

persisted, however, and, when added to his military rank and property holdings, served to delay his pardon" (Thompson, 1976, p. 43).

On April 23, 1866, President Johnson granted Albert Pike's pardon.

## Knights Templar

The Knights Templar are attacked because, according to Mr. Harris (page 28), the original Knights Templar's last Grand Master, Jacques DeMolay (Jock Du Molay) was burned at the stake by Pope Leo in 1310. In May, 1310, fifty-four Knights Templar were burned at the stake, but **not** DeMolay. Nor was the pope named Leo. The Knights Templar were formed as the "Poor Soldiers in Christ" and were given the official sanction of Pope Honorius II and the Church Council in January, 1128. The Order existed for 186 years. Its fall was caused by Philip the IV, King of France. On September 14, 1307, he ordered the arrest of every Templar in France, and on October 13, the knights were taken into custody. Philip urged other rulers to follow his example, but King Edward II of England did not believe the charges, nor did the king of Portugal. James of Aragon promised to take action only if requested to do so by the Church (Gould, V5, p.187).

Philip exerted great power over Pope Clement V, who had been a French Archbishop. Clement was the pontiff from June 5, 1305, to April 20, 1314. He moved the papal court to Avignon, France, where it remained for seventy-one years. The *New Catholic Encyclopedia* states that "In his relations with Philip, Clement at times acted firmly as the defender of the rights of the Church, then appearing deplorably weak, the victim of sheer lassitude (he suffered from cancer). In the main, the King dominated Clement by his strong personality." (Labande, 1967). Pope Clement originally opposed the action and on October 27, he suspended the powers of the Inquisition in France. After Philip met with the Pope and his cardinals on May 26, 1308, the Pope withdrew his suspension of the powers of the Inquisition in France. Twenty-five papal commissions were established to arrest, torture and kill members of the Order across Europe.

Modern historians have concluded that there is no external proof that any of the supposed confessions by the Knights Templars were extracted except by the "alternative of pardon or burning, by torture, by the threat of torture or by the indirect torture of prison and starvation" (Lea, V3, p. 266, 1958).

On March 18, 1314, six and one-half years after the first arrest of the members of the Knights Templar, DeMolay and his four preceptors were brought before a papal commission for the last time. Philip interrupted the proceedings and ordered that Jacques DeMolay and Guy of Avergne be burned at the stake that very evening (Haywood, 1925). At sunset, the seventy year old Grand Master was burned at the stake. He and the crusading Knights Templar were victims of a political power play. They were not guilty heretics who were justly punished by a Christ-centered Church.

## Cable Tow

The Cable Tow is referred to several times (pages 31-32 & 97) as the measurement of "the distance from the shore that Freemasonry will bury the mutilated body of someone who reveals its secrets." While this symbolic use is alluded to in one obligation, Mr. Harris never makes reference to its meaning as a physical restraint which is soon replaced by the bond of "the obligation which binds a man to his Mother Lodge and the gentle Craft" (Claudy, 1931, p. 41).

Mr. Harris attempts to connect the cable tow with the ancient mysteries of India by use of a quotation from "the well-known Masonic author, Pierson." He uses the "high Masonic authority" of Pierson to relate the Hindu Zennar and the Masonic cable tow. In a curious lack of scholarship, Mr. Harris can cite only the title and author's last name. In less than ten minutes of library research, I was able to discover that the author was Azariah Theodore Crane Pierson (1815-1889). His entire publication record, as listed in the *National Union Catalog*, consists of three 19 page booklets and one book, all of which were published during the early 1860's.

## **A Mason's Love**

Masonry is accused (page 58) of operating "on the principle of situation ethics. In its teachings on charity, it is obvious from its rituals that Freemasonry strays from the true meaning of Biblical love which is outlined in I Corinthians 13." This statement is a great injustice to a group of men who contributes over **\$2,000,000 per DAY** to the support of charities which range from the care of elderly masons, their widows and orphans to the support of the hospitals and clinics of the Shrine and Scottish Rite, where unsurpassed medical care is provided to all of those in need, regardless of race or creed absolutely free.

The Masonic ritual reminds us of our responsibility to care for the widow and orphan. But a Mason's charity (love) is to be universal. In the closing ceremony, the Master of the lodge reminds each mason that "every human being has a claim upon your kind offices; do good unto all..." The lecture of the first degree states "To soothe the unhappy, to sympathize with their misfortunes, to compassionate their miseries and to restore peace to their troubled minds is the great aim we have in view." No one who has ever visited a Shrine Crippled Children's Hospital can question the outreached hand of love of these masons.

## **God and a Mason's Reward**

On page 79, Mr. Harris is critical of the lecture of the Master Mason degree, where we are told that "...justice will sooner or later overtake us, and although our thoughts, words and actions may be hidden from the eyes of men, yet that All-Seeing Eye, whom the sun, moon and stars obey ... pervades the inmost recesses of the human heart, and will reward us according to our merits." He takes offense at the use of the phrase "All-Seeing Eye" in reference to God. Although he refers to Albert Mackey's explanation of it being a symbol of the omnipresence of God, he refuses to give this symbol any credence even though it is used in II Chronicles 15:9 and Jeremiah 23:24. He then says "But Christians know it is the Person of Jesus Christ who will reward men according to their faith." Perhaps Mr. Harris prefers not to read Matthew 16:27, where Jesus is recorded as saying "For the Son of man shall come in the glory of His Father with his angels; and then He shall reward every man according to his works." While the gift of salvation is provided through faith, the idea of a heavenly reward based on works is a frequent topic (e.g. Romans 2:6, II Corinthians 5:10, Revelations 20:12-13 and 22:12).

## **God's Presence in Everyday Life**

The writings of Albert Pike offer far from simple reading. Many of his arguments are long and involved. Such is the case of the quotation used on page 99. Within Pike's discussion of the symbolism of the 13th Degree, he describes how man can observe the

presence of God in everyday life. He notes a "*religion of toil*" is the feeling of a purpose of life.

*Self-respect, honor and conscience* which mirror divine justice. *Books* which can be of a religious tendency when they touch "the heart with the beauty of virtue, and the excellence of an upright life." He writes of a "*religion of society*" when we "repose perfect confidence in the integrity of another... his integrity and conscientiousness are the image of God to us." *Friendship* points to God so that "when friends meet, and hands are warmly pressed, and the eye kindles and the countenance is suffused with gladness, there is a religion between their hearts; and each loves and worships the True and Good that is in the other." The Masonic lodge is a "temple of religion" inasmuch as "we greet each other gladly, are lenient to each other's faults, regardful of each other's feelings, ready to relieve each other's wants." (Pike, pp. 212-214, 1871). It is through these things that we see God in our world, as all of the "religions" referred to by Pike point to God's power and presence in the world.

## The Fatherhood of God

Masons often refer to their fraternity as an organization based on "the Fatherhood of God and the Brotherhood of Man." Mr. Harris disputes this claim when he states that God "is not the father of all mankind" (page 131). He suggests that while God is the creator of all men, He is "Father" only to Christians. In its discussion of God in the New Testament, *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible* answers the question of the universality of the Fatherhood of God by saying that "it has the potentiality of becoming universal. If man's response to the fatherhood of God is limited, God's redemptive seeking after man knows no bounds." (Buttrick, 1962, V. II, p. 434). God is the Father of all mankind and He is ready and waiting to receive all who will recognize Him for what He always has been: "Our Father, who art in heaven..."

## Mr. Harris's "Authorities"

My efforts to obtain copies of Mr. Harris's references were for the most part unsuccessful. Even though I consider myself well-read in Masonic literature, I did not recognize the majority of the "well-known Masonic authorities." After searching the *National Union Catalog of Pre-1956 Imprints*, I discovered the following information about some of the sources of Mr. Harris's "facts."

J. D. Buck has 20 citations, including five Masonic, five psychology, three dealing with homeopathy (A system of medical practice which tried to cure patients by giving them potions which produced the same physical symptoms as the disease for which they sought a cure.), and four dealing with theosophy, including *Why I am a Theosophist*. (Theosophy is a modern movement originating in the U.S. in 1875 and following chiefly Buddhist and Brahmanic theories especially of pantheistic evolution and reincarnation). I can not help but wonder if Buck's quotations (pages 101-103) are drawn from other than Masonic principles.

Only three of Dr. R. Swinburne Clymer's 77 citations are Masonic in nature. Among his other books are *The Son of God* which carries the following notation, "the mystical teachings of the masters, giving a short sketch of the early life of Jesus and His training by the Essenean Order, and an interpretation of some of His teachings, in harmony with the fundamental principles of the Temple of Illumination known as the Christic

interpretation." I doubt if Dr. Clymer's writings represent even a tiny fraction of Masonic thought concerning the relationship between Masonry and religion.

## Dissension Continues

Perhaps it is futile to argue the question of whether or not freemasonry is a religion. Many prominent Masons have offered defenses and yet the confusion and dissension continues. In 1970, at the request of the Missouri Lodge of Research, Rev. Forrest D. Haggard, D.D., compiled the book *The Clergy and the Craft*. In this book, the various facets of the issue are presented in detail. Indeed, in the Entered Apprentice degree we have been cautioned that "neither are you to suffer your zeal for the institution to lead you into argument with those who, through ignorance, may ridicule it."

What is most distressing about *Freemasonry: The Invisible Cult In Our Midst* is neither its weak arguments nor its presentations of opinions as facts. Mr. Harris has produced a work with too many errors, misquotes and evidences of poor scholarship to warrant serious consideration by anyone who might be concerned with the interplay of the Masonic fraternity and the Christian religion.

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**Masonicinfo Note: This book appears with a cover and frontspiece which says, simply, "Freemasonry". The foreword, however, refers to the book as described above. Just a bit more obfuscation to sell more copies to unsuspecting Masons perhaps?**

**You can read more about the author, Jack Harris, right [here!](#)**



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